

Appl. No. 10/679,027

Amdt. Dated December 24, 2004

Reply to Office action of 11/09/2004

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claim set as shown below:

1. (Previously presented) A method for playing a strategic board game wherein the game is played by two or more players on a game board that is gridded to designate spaces such that pieces that are identifiable as belonging to each of the two or more players are positioned within, and moved among, the spaces; the method comprising the steps of:

requiring that the two or more players take turns for being an active player that is allowed to move one or more of the active player's pieces;

allowing the active player to move or position the active player's pieces in a way that manipulates by pushing or pulling an opposing player's pieces, wherein the opposing player's pieces are pieces that belong to an opposing player that is one of the two or more players other than the active player; and wherein:

pushing is a push move that comprises using a one of the active player's pieces to push a one of the opposing player's pieces out of a first space and into a second unoccupied space, and then moving the one of the active player's pieces into the first space; and

pulling is a pull move that comprises moving a one of the active player's pieces out of a third space and into a fourth unoccupied space, and then using the one of the active player's pieces to pull a one of the opposing player's pieces into the third space.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of manipulating the opposing player's pieces further comprises the step of:

using a one of the active player's pieces to freeze a one of the opposing player's pieces, thereby preventing movement of the one of the opposing player's pieces by the opposing player.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of:

providing means for any one of the two or more players to protect a piece that belongs to the one of the two or more players; such that protecting a one piece unfreezes or otherwise prevents freezing of the one piece.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the game board further comprises one or more spaces that are designated as trap spaces; and the method further comprises the step of:

removing from the game a piece that is moved into a one of the one or more trap spaces.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4, further comprising the step of:

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providing means for any one of the two or more players to protect a piece that belongs to the one of the two or more players; such that protecting a one piece prevents removal of the one piece when the one piece is in a one of the one or more trap spaces.

6. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

limiting the step of manipulating the opposing player's pieces such that a one of the active player's pieces in a third space manipulates only a one of the opposing player's pieces in a fourth space provided that the fourth space is adjacent to the third space.

7. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

assigning a type to each one of the pieces belonging to each of the two or more players, wherein there are at least two varieties of type, and the varieties are at least visually distinguishable for all of the two or more players;

predetermining a strength value for each one of the at least two varieties of type, wherein the strength value is selected from a hierarchy of strength values from weak to strong, such that when a first piece having a first type with a first strength value is compared to a second piece having a second type with a second strength value, if the first strength value is stronger than the second strength value, then the first piece is a stronger piece relative to the second piece which is a weaker piece relative to the first piece; and

allowing only stronger pieces to manipulate weaker pieces.

8. (Previously presented) The method of claim 7, wherein the game board comprises a rectangular array of orthogonally adjacent spaces arranged in rows and columns; and the method further comprises the steps of:

assigning a first row, a second row, and a goal row for each one of the two or more players;

during the first turn of the game, each active player determining an initial setup for the active player's pieces wherein the active player's pieces are arranged in the spaces within the active player's first row and second row; and

completing an instance of playing the strategic board game wherein one of the two or more players wins by being the first one of the two or more players to move a one of the winning player's weakest pieces to the goal row assigned to the winning player.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

during one turn, allowing the active player to move or cause to move one or more of the pieces a total of one to four turn steps, wherein a turn step comprises a piece being moved from one

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space to any adjacent unoccupied space;

determining that a push move or a pull move uses two of the turn steps in a turn; and

requiring that a push move or a pull move must be completed within one turn.

10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 9, wherein the game board comprises a rectangular array of orthogonally adjacent spaces arranged in rows and columns; and the method further comprises the step of:

further defining adjacent spaces as spaces that are orthogonally adjacent, row-wise or column-wise.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

requiring that a first push move or pull move must be completed before a second push move or pull move can be performed.

12. (Currently Amended) A method for playing a strategic board game wherein the game is played by two or more players on a game board that is gridded to designate spaces such that pieces that are identifiable as belonging to each of the two or more players are positioned within, and moved among, the spaces; the method comprising the steps of:

requiring that the two or more players take turns for being an active player that is allowed to move one or more of the active player's pieces; and

allowing the active player to move or position the active player's pieces in a way that manipulates by using a one of the active player's pieces to freeze a one of an opposing player's pieces, thereby preventing movement of the one of the opposing player's pieces by the opposing player; wherein the opposing player is one of the two or more players other than the active player[[]];

assigning a type to each one of the pieces belonging to each of the two or more players, wherein there are at least two varieties of type and the varieties are at least visually distinguishable for all of the two or more players;

predetermining a strength value for each one of the at least two varieties of type, wherein the strength value is selected from a hierarchy of strength values from weak to strong, such that when a first piece having a first type with a first strength value is compared to a second piece having a second type with a second strength value, if the first strength value is stronger than the second strength value, then the first piece is a stronger piece relative to the second piece which is a weaker piece relative to the first piece; and

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allowing only stronger pieces to manipulate weaker pieces.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of:
providing means for any one of the two or more players to protect a piece that belongs to the one of the two or more players; such that protecting a one piece unfreezes or otherwise prevents freezing of the one piece.

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein the game board further comprises one or more spaces that are designated as trap spaces; and the method further comprises the step of:
removing from the game a piece that is moved into a one of the one or more trap spaces.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15, further comprising the step of:
providing means for any one of the two or more players to protect a piece that belongs to the one of the two or more players; such that protecting a one piece prevents removal of the one piece when the one piece is in a one of the one or more trap spaces.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of:
limiting the step of manipulating the opposing player's pieces such that a one of the active player's pieces in a third space manipulates only a one of the opposing player's pieces in a fourth space provided that the fourth space is adjacent to the third space.

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~18~~ 12, wherein the game board comprises a rectangular array of orthogonally adjacent spaces arranged in rows and columns; and the method further comprises the steps of:

assigning a first row, a second row, and a goal row for each one of the two or more players;
during the first turn of the game, each active player determining an initial setup for the active player's pieces wherein the active player's pieces are arranged in the spaces within the active player's first row and second row; and

completing an instance of playing the strategic board game wherein one of the two or more players wins by being the first one of the two or more players to move a one of the winning player's weakest pieces to the goal row assigned to the winning player.

20. (Original) The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of:
during one turn, allowing the active player to move or cause to move one or more of the pieces a total of one to four turn steps, wherein a turn step comprises a piece being moved from one

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space to any adjacent unoccupied space.

21. (Previously presented) The method of claim 20, wherein the game board comprises a rectangular array of orthogonally adjacent spaces arranged in rows and columns; and the method further comprises the step of:

further defining adjacent spaces as spaces that are orthogonally adjacent, row-wise or column-wise.

22. (Currently Amended) A method for playing a strategic board game wherein the game is played by two or more players on a game board that is gridded to designate spaces such that pieces that are identifiable as belonging to each of the two or more players are positioned within, and moved among, the spaces; the method comprising the steps of:

designating one or more spaces as trap spaces; and

removing from the game a piece that is moved into a one of the one or more trap spaces[.];

and

providing that a player may protect a first one of the player's pieces by positioning a second one of the player's pieces in a space that is adjacent to the space occupied by the first one of the player's pieces, thereby preventing removal of the first one of the player's pieces from the game when it is in the one of the one or more trap spaces.

23. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 22, wherein the game board comprises a rectangular array of orthogonally adjacent spaces arranged in rows and columns; and the method further comprises the step of:

further defining adjacent spaces as spaces that are orthogonally adjacent, row-wise or column-wise, further comprising the step of:

providing means for any one of the two or more players to protect a piece that belongs to the one of the two or more players; such that protecting a one piece prevents removal of the one piece when the one piece is in a one of the one or more trap spaces.

24. (Previously presented) A method for playing a strategic board game wherein the game is played by two or more players on a game board that is gridded to form a rectangular array of orthogonally adjacent spaces arranged in rows and columns such that pieces that are identifiable as belonging to each of the two or more players are positioned within, and moved among, the spaces; the method comprising the steps of:

assigning a type to each one of the pieces belonging to each of the two or more players,

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wherein there are at least two varieties of type and the varieties are at least visually distinguishable for all of the two or more players;

predetermining a strength value for each one of the at least two varieties of type, wherein the strength value is selected from a hierarchy of strength values from weak to strong, such that when a first piece having a first type with a first strength value is compared to a second piece having a second type with a second strength value, if the first strength value is stronger than the second strength value, then the first piece is a stronger piece relative to the second piece which is a weaker piece relative to the first piece;

assigning a first row, and a second row, and a goal row for each one of the two or more players, such that each player's goal row is the row that is farthest away from the player's first row and second row;

requiring that the two or more players take turns for being an active player that is allowed to move one or more of the active player's pieces;

during the first turn of the game, each active player determining an initial setup for the active player's pieces wherein the active player's pieces are arranged in the spaces within the active player's first row and second row; and

completing an instance of playing the strategic board game wherein one of the two or more players wins by being the first one of the two or more players to move a one of the winning player's weakest pieces to the goal row assigned to the winning player.

25. (Previously presented) A strategic board game apparatus for playing a strategic board game by two or more players, the apparatus comprising:

a game board that is gridded to designate an array of spaces;
pieces that are identifiable as belonging to each of the two or more players, wherein the pieces can be positioned within, and moved among, the spaces; and
one or more spaces that are identifiable as trap spaces for removing from the game a piece that is moved into a one of the one or more trap spaces.

26. (Cancelled)

27. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 25, further comprising:

a type that is assigned to each one of the pieces belonging to each of the two or more players, wherein there are at least two varieties of type and the varieties are at least visually distinguishable for all of the two or more players; and

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a strength value that is predetermined for each one of the at least two varieties of type, wherein the strength value is selected from a hierarchy of strength values from weak to strong, such that when a first piece having a first type with a first strength value is compared to a second piece having a second type with a second strength value, if the first strength value is stronger than the second strength value, then the first piece is a stronger piece relative to the second piece which is a weaker piece relative to the first piece; such that:

a one player's piece is only allowed to manipulate weaker pieces that belong to an other one of the two or more players, wherein manipulation comprises one piece causing or preventing movement of another piece.

28. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 27, further comprising:

a rectangular array of orthogonally adjacent spaces arranged in rows and columns; and
a first row, a second row, and a goal row that are assigned to each one of the two or more players; such that:

a player's initial setup of pieces comprises the player positioning pieces belonging to the player within the player's first row and second row, and an instance of the game is won when the player moves a one of the player's pieces that is of a designated type to the player's goal row.

29. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 27, wherein:

the game board further comprises a rectangular array of sixty-four orthogonally adjacent spaces arranged in eight rows and eight columns; and

the one or more trap spaces consist of four trap spaces, being spaces located at intersections of a third and sixth of the eight rows with a third and sixth of the eight columns.

30. (Previously presented) The method of claim 24, further comprising the steps of:

designating one or more spaces as trap spaces;
removing a piece from the game only when the piece is moved into a one of the one or more trap spaces; and

providing means for any one of the two or more players to protect a piece that belongs to the one of the two or more players; such that protecting a one piece prevents removal of the one piece when the one piece is in a one of the one or more trap spaces.

31. (Previously presented) The method of claim 24, further comprising the steps of:

allowing the active player to move or position the active player's pieces in a way that manipulates an opposing player's pieces, wherein the opposing player's pieces are pieces that belong

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to an opposing player that is one of the two or more players other than the active player;

designating one or more spaces as trap spaces, and removing a piece from the game when the piece is moved into a one of the one or more trap spaces; and

providing means for any one of the two or more players to protect a piece that belongs to the one of the two or more players; such that protecting a one piece prevents removal of the one piece when the one piece is in a one of the one or more trap spaces.

32. (Previously presented) The method of claim 31, further comprising the steps of:

specifying a movement pattern for each type of piece wherein all movement patterns comprise stepwise movement from a first space to an unoccupied second space that is orthogonally adjacent to the first space;

limiting the step of manipulating the opposing player's pieces such that a one of the active player's pieces in a third space manipulates only a one of the opposing player's pieces in a fourth space provided that the fourth space is orthogonally adjacent to the third space;

during one turn, requiring the active player to move, or by means of manipulation cause to move, one or more of the pieces a total of one to four turn steps, wherein a turn step comprises a piece being moved from one space to any orthogonally adjacent unoccupied space; and

requiring that manipulation causing movement of the opposing player's piece must be accompanied within the same turn by corresponding causative movement by the active player's piece.

33. (Previously presented) The method of claim 32, further comprising the step of:

controlling an instance of playing the strategic board game by using time controls that comprise:

a turn time (M) that is the number of minutes:seconds allowed per active player's turn;

a player's reserve time (R) that is the number of minutes:seconds in a reserve maintained for each of the 2 or more players, for allowing extra time for the active player's turn;

a percentage (P) that is the percent of unused turn time that is added to the reserve when the active player declares completion of the active player's turn;

a reserve limit (L) that is an upper limit for the number of minutes:seconds in the reserve;

a maximum turn time (T) that is the number of minutes:seconds within which the active player must complete the active player's turn; and

a game limit (G) that is the number of hours:minutes, or the number of turns, after which the instance of game playing is halted and the winner is determined by a scoring system; wherein:

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the active player loses the instance of game playing whenever the active player fails to complete a turn within a total of the turn time plus the active player's reserve time (M+R), or within the maximum turn time (T), whichever amount of time is less; and

when the active player completes the turn in less than the turn time, then the remaining amount of turn time is added to the active player's reserve time as determined by multiplying the percentage (P) times the remaining turn time, the total time in the active player's reserve time being limited to the reserve limit.

34. (Previously presented) The method of claim 32, further comprising the step of:
using a scoring system to determine a winner for an incomplete instance of game playing, such that a one player having the highest Score is declared the winner, the scoring system comprising:

a Score tallied for each of the two or more players such that a player's Score equals a sum of Weakest-type Points (Rp) plus the product of Piece Points (P) times the sum of a Weakest-type Count (C) plus one, expressed in an equation as $\text{Score} = R_p + P \cdot (C + 1)$; wherein:

the Weakest-type Points equal a sum of cubed row values for each one of the player's weakest pieces, wherein each row value is a number assigned to the row to which the one of the player's weakest pieces has progressed, and the row value number assignments consist of sequential integers that increase from the integer 1 as rows are counted from the player's first row, having a row value of 1, to the player's goal row;

the Weakest-type Count equals the number of weakest pieces that the player has on the game board; and

the Piece Points equal a sum of piece type values for each of the pieces that the player has on the game board, wherein the piece type values are predetermined and increase with the strength value of the type.

35. (Previously presented) The method of claim 6, wherein the game board comprises a rectangular array of orthogonally adjacent spaces arranged in rows and columns; and the method further comprises the step of:

further defining adjacent spaces as spaces that are orthogonally adjacent, row-wise or column-wise.